



# The Spectacle

## From the Office not as far Down the Hall

I know this space is normally filled with some eloquently constructed passage filled with witticisms from our Site Manager Kendell Thompson. Instead this time you are left with a short summary from your acting Site Manager Malcolm Willoughby. Luckily I have some great news to pass on to you. After years of trying (some guys have all the luck) Kendell and his lovely wife Mary Hazel just received a new addition into their lives. In the wee hours of February 16<sup>th</sup> Mary gave birth ( from the stories it sounds like it was a lot of work and pain, not much like giving ) to a baby boy, 8 pounds 11 ounces and 21 inches long Zane Blaise Thompson! The whole family is doing great even Cosmos the dog. Below is a picture of father and son that has been e-mailed out. I am sure that soon many will have the opportunity to see little Zane at future Arlington House events and there should pictures coming in soon when Kendell comes back to work around the middle of March. Until then we will keep them in our hearts and prayers. Well done Mary, Zane and you too, Kendell.



Sketch of Arlington House with Civil War tents

## “Lee’s Great Decision” An Evening Program at Arlington

A special evening program to commemorate Robert E. Lee’s difficult choice to resign from the United States Army will take place at Arlington House on Friday night, April 16<sup>th</sup>. “Lee’s Great Decision” sets visitors in Arlington House on the historic evening of April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1861 when Lee struggled with an agonizing choice between country and native state. Reservations for the two programs at 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. are available by calling (703) 235-1530.

This somber program offers a rare glimpse into the rooms of Arlington House by candlelight. Visitors will encounter National Park Service Rangers and volunteers in period dress of 1861. Rangers will discuss the event and attitudes prevalent on the eve of

the American Civil War and the consequences of Lee’s decision.

Visitors will be allowed to park in the parking lot behind the Old Administration Building (Park Service Office).



# Area Special Events

## March 13

Lecture, "Godey's Lady's Book," at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria, Virginia. 1 pm. \$5. Reservations suggested. 703-838-4848.

## March 13-14

Living history, "Soldier and Spies," learn about women who "joined the cause" in various capacities at Endview Plantation in Newport News, Virginia. Free with admission. 757-887-1862 or [www.endview.org](http://www.endview.org).

## March 14

Living history, "On Board the Constellation: An Irish Perspective from a Civil War Marine," noon at the Baltimore Civil War Museum at the President Street Station, Baltimore, Maryland. Noon. Free with museum admission. [www.mdhs.org](http://www.mdhs.org) or 410-461-9377.

Van tour, "Defending the Southside," features strong points and forts on the south side of the James River, including Fort Boykins and Drewry's Bluff. Begins at Lee Hall Mansion in Newport News, Virginia. 8 am-5 pm. \$45. Reservations. 757-888-3371 or [www.leehall.org](http://www.leehall.org).

## March 17

Lecture, "Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians," by Dr. Mark Grimsley at the Library of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia. Co-sponsored by the Museum of the Confederacy. 5:30 pm. \$5. Reservations: 804-649-1861 extension 10.

## March 18

Lecture, "Civil War Medicine: A Time of Discovery," applied in the armies and navies. Talk at the USS Constellation in The Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland. 7 pm. \$12 at door, \$10 advance. 410-539-1797 or [www.constellation.org](http://www.constellation.org).

## March 19

Lecture, "These dead shall not have died in vain..." Dr. James I. Robertson compares Lincoln and Stonewall Jackson at the Knowledge Point, 20 S. Cameron St. in

Winchester, Virginia. 7:30 pm. Free. Reservations. 540-535-3543 or [www.theknowledgepoint.org](http://www.theknowledgepoint.org).

## March 19-21

Conference, "Sidebars to the Lincoln Assassination," hosted by the Surratt Society at the Colony South Hotel in Clinton, Maryland. Conference includes sessions on pathology, Civil War terrorism and more. Optional tours of "Mr. Lincoln's Forts" and "The Civil War in Maryland" also are offered. Fee charged. Call 301-868-1121 or see [www.surratt.org](http://www.surratt.org) for details.

## March 20

Interpretive workshop, provides tools needed by historical interpreters, docents, teachers and those who include Civil War medicine in their presentations at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Maryland. \$40. Space limited. Reservations required. 301-695-1864 or [www.civilwarmed.org](http://www.civilwarmed.org).

## March 20

Seminar, "Famous Units of the Civil War," at Longwood College (Hull Building, Room 132) in Farmville, Virginia. Includes discussions of Mosby's Rangers, Duryee's Zouaves and the Stonewall and Iron Brigades. Speakers include Brian Pohanka and Dr. James I. Robertson Jr. 9:15 am-4 pm. Free. More info: 434-395-2220 or 434 352-8987 extension 12.

Lecture, "Civil War Nurses," at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria, Virginia. 1 pm. \$5. Reservations suggested. 703-838-4848.

## March 20-21

Tour, "Stonewall Jackson and the Maryland Campaign of 1862," based in Hagerstown, Maryland. A Civil War Education Association tour. \$325. Details: 800-298-1861 or [www.cwea.net](http://www.cwea.net).

## March 20-21

Reenactment, living history, encampments, lectures, kids' activities and battles each afternoon at Endview Plantation in Newport

News, Virginia. 10 am-4 pm. \$7. 757-887-1862 or [www.endview.org](http://www.endview.org).

## March 21

Lecture and special program, "Quilts: The Comforts of War," talk explores trades and trends from the Revolutionary War-WWI, at the Old City Cemetery in Lynchburg. 2 pm. Lecture free, quilt appraisal, \$10/per item. 434-847-1465 or [www.gravegarden.org](http://www.gravegarden.org).

## March 24

Lecture, "The Fate of Civil Liberties in the Confederacy and Union," by Dr. Mark Neely at the Library of Virginia in Richmond. Co-sponsored by the Museum of the Confederacy. 5:30 pm. \$5. Reservations: 804-649-1861 extension 10.

## March 26

Opening Day anniversary celebration at the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg. 6 pm. Reservations required. Details: 866-258-4729 or [www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org).

## March 26-27

Seminar, "Religion and the Civil War: Whose Side Was God On?" at Liberty University in Lynchburg. Examines the impact of religion on Civil War personalities. Begins with dinner/speakers/roundtable Friday 6:30 pm. Continues with full schedule of speakers on Saturday. Reservations by March 24, \$50; after, \$60. 434-582-2512 or [www.liberty.edu/civilwar](http://www.liberty.edu/civilwar).

## March 27

Living history, "To Live and Die in Dixie," the lives of Virginia women during the Civil War at Lee Hall Mansion in Newport News, Virginia. 2 pm. \$10 includes tour. [www.leehall.org](http://www.leehall.org) or 757-888-3371.

Walking tour, "1st Corps on the 1st day" at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. A Civil War Education Association tour. \$125. Details: 800-298-1861 or [www.cwea.net](http://www.cwea.net).

Civil War Show, tables of artifacts, books,

(continued on page 3)

# Saint Patrick's Day

Arlington House VIPs are invited to join the National Park Service, representatives of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and the Embassy of Ireland in observing St. Patrick's Day and the planting of shamrocks in memory of George Washington Parke Custis. The date for the ceremony will be Saturday, March 13th at 1:30 p.m.

The formal program includes a welcome, remarks, and the presentation of the GWP Custis Award to Congressman Donald M. Payne. Those gathered will then be invited to join the procession to the Custis gravesite for the planting of the shamrocks, with respect to his 1844 request. The color guard of the Ancient Order of Hibernians traditionally leads the procession.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House was the home of Robert E. Lee and his family for thirty years and is uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families. It is now preserved as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and the South.

**Arlington House**  
**The Robert E. Lee Memorial**  
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Turkey Run Park  
McLean, VA 22101

**Phone**  
703-235-1530

**Web Site**  
<http://www.nps.gov/arho>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

# George Washington Parke Custis: Friend of Ireland

George Washington Parke Custis was an ardent and unfailing supporter of Ireland's struggle for independence during the first half of the 19th Century. His greatest hope was that sons of Erin would one day have the civil and religious liberties and freedoms that Americans enjoyed. From about 1826 until his death in 1857, he joined with Irish-Americans in Washington City and Alexandria to support the cause of independence for Ireland.

For close to 30 years, Custis was asked by his Irish friends to preside over the annual St. Patrick's Day banquets in Washington City. He once remarked that his green coat and bald head had become a familiar sight at those gatherings. He claimed that St. Patrick's Day, together with Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July, were the "three holy days" which he observed with "religious fervor." As orator of the day, Mr. Custis spoke forcefully and eloquently on behalf of Erin's cause. Drawing on details from the American Revolution, he compared Ireland's struggle with America's fight for independence.

Following is excerpt from "An Ode to Young Ireland," first presented by "George Washington Parke Custis, Esq. of Arlington" at the St. Patrick Day Banquet in 1844... (to be sung to the air of "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young charms"):

"..Arouse thee, oh Ireland! While long thou hast slept;  
Oppression has stalked through the land;  
No tears for thy sorrows, too long thou hast wept,  
Thy day of redemption's at hand.  
The shadowy forms of thy Heroes repair  
To gatherings on Mountain and height;  
The cries of the martyrs are heard in the air,  
Young Ireland, arise in thy might..."

Following the banquet, during which this Ode was presented by Mr. Custis, he concluded his oration remarking that when the day came that Ireland achieved its independence...

I TRUST IN GOD THAT...THROUGH YEARS AFTER MY MORTAL BODY SHALL HAVE BEEN LAID IN THE BOSOM OF OUR COMMON MOTHER, SOME HONEST IRISH HEART MAY COME AND DROPPING A SHAMROCK ON MY GRAVE, CRY 'GOD BLESS HIM'."

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## Area Special Events (continued from page 2)

weapons and more for show and sale at the Eagles Lodge, 21 Cool Springs Road in Fredericksburg, Virginia. 9 am-5 pm. \$5. 540-372-6709.  
**March 27-28**

Living history weekend at Five Forks, part of the Petersburg National Battlefield west of Petersburg, Virginia. Demonstrations, ranger programs and more. Free. 804-732-6092 or [www.nps.gov/pete](http://www.nps.gov/pete).

# Significant Historic Events in March

## March 5, 1798

George Washington wrote a frank assessment of the character of his ward, GWP Custis, for the head of St. John's College in Annapolis, where Custis had been enrolled in February after his expulsion from the College of New Jersey (Princeton). Washington wrote that Custis possessed "competent talents to fit him for any studies, but they are counteracted by an indolence of mind which renders it difficult to draw them into action."

## March 25, 1818

Henry 'Lighthorse Harry' Lee died at "Dungeness," the estate of General Nathaniel Greene's daughter on Cumberland Island, Georgia. Henry Lee was enroute home to Virginia from Barbados where he had tried to regain his health and escape his creditors. He was buried in the Greene family cemetery on Cumberland Island, his remains now rest in the Lee crypt at Lexington.

## March 11, 1824

Robert E. Lee was appointed to West Point by President James Monroe, but "owing to the long list of applicants, he could not be admitted until July 1, 1825."

## March 29, 1836

GWP Custis was reappointed Justice of the Peace for Alexandria County by President Andrew Jackson, having first been appointed in 1818 by President James Madison.

## March 1838

On the way to St. Louis to complete an engineering project, the Lees stopped in Baltimore, and Mrs. Lee persuaded her husband to have his portrait painted by American artist William Edward West (1788-1857). As Mrs. Lee felt he should be depicted in full dress uniform, wearing his epaulettes, she had her mother send them by train to Baltimore. Mrs. Lee had her portrait

made at the same time. Today the original portraits hang at Washington and Lee University, and copies hang over the mantels in the White Parlor.

## March 12, 1850

G. W. Custis Lee was appointed to West Point by President Zachary Taylor.

## March 1855

Robert E. Lee was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the new Second Cavalry raised for service on the frontier.

## March 16, 1861

Robert E. Lee was commissioned a full Colonel in the United States Army and given command of the 1st Cavalry Regiment. Abraham Lincoln signed the commission, and Lee did not hesitate to accept it when it was forwarded to him on March 28.

## March 2, 1865

General Lee proposed to General Grant that they meet to discuss "the possibility of arriving at a satisfactory adjustment of the present unhappy difficulties." Lee received Grant's negative reply on March 4. President Lincoln had decided that "no peace terms would be discussed with the states in rebellion until Confederate forces laid down their arms: the South must surrender first."

## March 4, 1925

Congress approved legislation authorizing the restoration of Arlington House as the 'Lee Mansion National Memorial.' It was believed that this Congressional action "would be tangible recognition by the country, North and South, that the bitterness of other days is entirely gone." The Secretary of War was ordered to restore the house "as nearly as may be practicable ... to the condition in which it existed immediately prior to the Civil War."

## March 4, 1929

Four years after Congress authorized the creation of the "Lee Mansion National Memorial," the first significant appropriation of \$90,000 to restore and furnish Arlington House was approved by the War Department.

## March 22, 1932

Not yet fully furnished, Arlington House was opened to the public as a historic house museum.





# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

## Maryland Beaten Biscuits

George Clark, a slave cook at Arlington House, was famous for making traditional fine dishes that George Washington Parke Custis ate as a young man at Mt. Vernon. One of the items that we know would have been in the diet of the Custis family would have been Maryland Beaten Biscuits. Mrs. Lee requested the biscuits while living at Ft. Monroe. One of the oldest biscuit recipes in the Chesapeake Bay region originated on the plantations of southern Maryland. Information tells us, that the technique used in making these biscuits was very interesting. You beat the mixture with a heavy mallet or axe head for 30 minutes or until dough forms bubbles and cracks when beaten.

**4 cups all-purpose flour**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**1 ½ tablespoons lard or vegetable shortening**  
**1 ¾ cups water - up to 2 cups**

The oldest and most famous biscuit recipe of the Chesapeake Bay region originated on the plantations of southern Maryland. The traditional preparation can be termed, at the very least, a culinary cardiovascular aerobic exercise.

Its execution is best described by Joanne Pritchett, whose great-great grandmother was a cook on a St. Mary's plantation: "Honey, every time I know I'm going to make these biscuits, I get myself good and mad. Normally I think about my sister-in-law, Darlene, who ran off with my husband right after Granny Pritchett's funeral. That was years ago, but it still galls me into making some of the tenderest biscuits around.")

"It's very simple. I just sift the flour and salt together in a bowl. Some people, nowadays, like to use Crisco or something like that. But I believe in lard. It gives it that certain taste.

"So then, I cut the lard into the flour with the tips of my fingers, working it real quick. During this step I make believe I'm putting out Darlene's eyes.

"Then, little by little, I pour in the cold water, until I get a good stiff dough. Put it on a real solid table with flour. Now if your table is weak, honey, the legs'll fall right off. I've seen it happen!

"Depending on my mood, I use an axe or a big old mallet. I make a ball out of the dough to look like Darlene's head and, baby, I let her have it. Use the flat side of the axe or mallet, and beat the hell out of the dough till it blisters good. Takes about half an hour, but honey, it makes them tender as butter.

"Form the dough into balls, the size of little eggs, and flatten 'em a bit on the board. Put a few pokes in the center with a fork, then bake in a hot 425°F oven for about 20 to 25 minutes. Serve hot and put some liniment on your arm, or it'll be acting up the next day."

Makes about 3 dozen biscuits

## AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact Delphine Gross no later than the 20th of each month with availability dates and times to be posted the following month (Please call by March 20th with April information).

Even if you are a regularly scheduled VIP please contact Delphine to confirm your availability. Again, the contact number is (703) 235-1530 ext. 227. Please leave the dates and times you are available on the voice mail. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

## VIP Training

Volunteer training will be held on Sunday, March 21, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. If you missed the February 29<sup>th</sup> training session please try to attend this one. Attendance at one of the two sessions is essential to new volunteers. Experienced volunteers may also attend. Training will cover site guidelines and procedures as well as themes and methods of interpretation. Please bring a bag lunch. Contact Delphine at (703)235-1530 to confirm.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House  
The Robert E. Lee Memorial  
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Turkey Run Park  
McLean, VA 22101

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Spectacle is a monthly newsletter for the volunteers of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

**Editor**

Delphine Gross

**Supervisory Park Ranger**

Frank Cucurullo

**Contributors**

Malcolm Willoughby  
Delphine Gross

**NPS Photographers**

Keith Drews

**Comments? Write to:**

Kendell Thompson, Site Manager  
Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial  
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Turkey Run Park  
McLean, VA 22101

## Volunteers Needed

The roster of active volunteers is in dire need of additional names!!! If you know anyone interested in joining our ranks please refer them to Delphine Gross, Volunteer Coordinator (703) 235-1530 ext. 227.

